

USED BOAT REVIEW

BY STEVE KNAUTH

Catalina 320

It was the trip of a lifetime, a cruising couple's dream: 46 days out of New Bern, N.C., on a 32-foot sloop; 854 nautical miles, round trip, into Chesapeake Bay and back; 45 nights anchored, moored, rafted or tied — and only three nights at a marina.

Pamlico Sound, Kitty Hawk Bay to Albemarle Sound, the Dismal Swamp Canal and Norfolk, Va. — and then the whole of the Bay to play in. Karl and Elaine Mielenhausen call their 2008 odyssey "an excellent adventure." It was just what they had in mind when they bought their 2000 Catalina 320 in 2005, hull No. 690 of the popular design (more than 1,200 built).

For the Mielenhausens, satisfied owners of a Catalina 22, buying the bigger boat was a natural.



The Mielenhausens

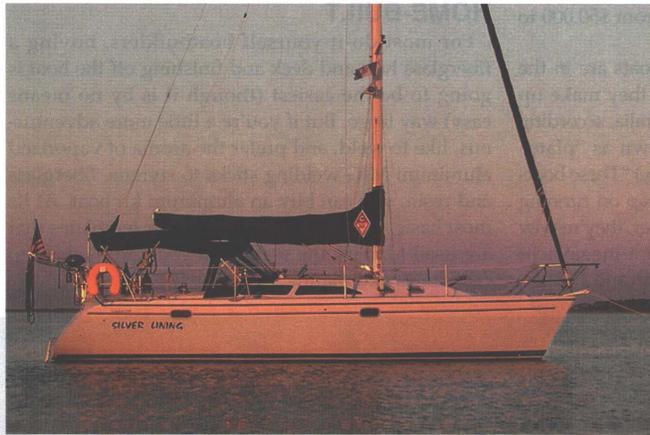
"We knew Catalina offered a quality product with good value and strong owner support," says Karl Mielenhausen, 59, a retired manager with Eastman Kodak. "We had researched various Catalina models and felt the 320 had the best features and greatest value."

They used Yachtworld.com and other Internet sources to compare used models, focusing on boats that were about 5 years old and looking at about a half-dozen in various East Coast locations. "Broken in, but with significant life left on the canvas, rigging and systems," says Mielenhausen. Along the way he put together a database of feature changes during the years of production, as well as typical problems to look for.

They found the 320 they wanted not far from their home and bought it from the original owner for \$76,000. "We were drawn by the standing headroom in the cabin, the walkthrough transom and the swim platform," says Mielenhausen. "We are also impressed by the spacious cockpit, which turns out to be great when having family and friends on board as well for after-sail partying. Best of all, we liked the way the boat sailed and motored."

There's been little to do to the 9-year-old boat. So far, Mielenhausen has installed a second NavPod instrument housing on the binnacle for the GPS/plotter, added a remote control for the stereo system, put in a starting battery, and upgraded with an anchor washdown.

You get to know a boat pretty well on a 46-day cruise — its good points and its shortcomings; the voyage is a test of yacht concept, design and execution. By the time the couple finally returned to their slip at the Northwest Creek Marina, just off the Neuse River in New Bern, Silver Lining had passed



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 32 feet, 6 inches **LWL:** 28 feet **BEAM:** 11 feet, 9 inches **DRAFT:** 6 feet, 6 inches (fin keel); 4 feet, 10 inches (wing keel) **WEIGHT:** 11,300 pounds (fin keel); 11,700 pounds (wing keel) **RIG:** masthead sloop **SAIL AREA:** 512 square feet (100 percent foretriangle) **AUXILIARY POWER:** 27-hp diesel **TANK-AGE:** 19 gallons fuel, 45 gallons water **BUILDER:** Catalina Yachts, Woodland Hills, Calif. Phone: (818) 884-7700. www.catalinayachts.com

with flying colors. "She performed quite well under power and sail, all systems worked properly, and we never felt our safety was compromised," says Mielenhausen.

On the water, the 320 proved a stable, steady sailer. The couple sail under mainsail and 135 percent genoa in up to 18- or 20-knot winds before reefing. "It seems to like to sail best when heeled around 15 degrees," says Mielenhausen. "It's very sensitive to traveler position in light air, and you can use it carefully to power up or depower in the gusts and heavier air." Auxiliary power comes from a 27-hp Yanmar 3GM, and Silver Lining cruises at a little more than 6 knots at 3,000 rpm. Fuel burn is less than a gallon an hour.

Boats are a compromise, and the Catalina 320 does have a few limitations, says Mielenhausen. Water supply is just 45 gallons, waste capacity just 22 gallons, and both must be monitored carefully. Mielenhausen is also considering changes to the battery charging system.

Modifications — that's where the Catalina owners association comes in. It's where the Catalina crowd shares technical information, sailing techniques, and suggestions for cruising destinations. Some associations even have tool loaner programs. But, says Mielenhausen, best of all is the fellowship that comes from interacting with fellow owners.

"At this point in our life, the Catalina 320 is a great choice," he says. "Sure, sometimes we'd like to be going faster or have a furling mainsail or larger water and waste capacity. But for the money, we really think the Catalina 320 hits the sweet spot, balancing cost, complexity, features and performance."

WALKTHROUGH

The Catalina 320 hull is a modern cruising shape with round bilges and not much wetted surface. It comes with either a fin or wing keel matched to a spade rudder, and the masthead sloop rig uses a high-aspect mainsail and 135 percent genoa. Her ample beam and freeboard contribute to stability and interior volume.

The boat sleeps up to seven, and the cabin layout

starts with a master stateroom aft with a berth for two. The U-shaped galley is at the foot of the companionway, and equipment includes a multiburner stovetop, refrigerator and a double sink. The head compartment is to starboard and comes with a sink, shower and marine head.

The main cabin amidships has room for a bench lounge (converts to single berth) to port and a dinette with C-shaped seating, (convertible to a double berth), to starboard. There's a V-berth for two forward. The interior is trimmed in varnished teak and other hardwoods, and comes with a teak-and-holly cabin sole.

The Catalina 320 can be found all around the country, with pricing from around \$60,000 and up. A 1995 model in San Diego was listed at \$62,500, a 1994 in Texas for \$59,500, and a 1996 model in Maryland for \$67,000. ■

BACKGROUND

Catalina Yachts was founded in 1969 when the California-built Catalina 22 made its debut at a West Coast boat show. The capable, affordable sailboat was a hit and quickly established a reputation for what designer/founder Frank Butler called "good boats ... for good value." By 1975,



5,000 of the 22s had been built. Other popular, trendsetting designs followed, including the Catalina 27 and 30. The Catalina 320 came out in 1993, and by 2004 more than 1,000 had been sold.

Today, Catalina builds more than 20 models of sailboats, from the 8-foot Sabot to 47-foot ocean cruisers. The original Catalina 320 has been upgraded as the 320 MkII, with almost 2 more feet of length and more amenities.